



Flood Control District

of Maricopa County

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Flood Control District Closer to Realizing a Rejuvenated Gila River

GOODYEAR (Feb. 6, 2008) -- The Flood Control District (District) completed its re-vegetation process today at the El Rio Educational Research and Development Project (R&D) site on the Gila River near Estrella Mountain Regional Park in Goodyear. Approximately 30 large Fremont cottonwood poles were planted in the river bottom. The new trees complement the velvet mesquite and other plants placed on the site in 2007.

The District's R&D project is designed to study how environmental improvements, such as the replacement of salt cedar vegetation with native plants, can restore the Gila River's natural flood control function while improving the watercourse habitat for wildlife species in the area. The El Rio R&D project is a five-year research study which is part of the District's El Rio Watercourse Master Plan, an expansive flood control, river rejuvenation and multi-use recreation plan for a 17.5-mile stretch of the river through Avondale, Buckeye and Goodyear.

"The Gila River has the potential to be a one-of-a-kind watercourse amenity for the Southwest Valley," said District 5 County Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox. "The El Rio R&D project is the first step in restoring the Gila to its place as the economic and recreational lifeblood of the region."

Cottonwoods can spread and grow from twigs, branches, or trunks (cuttings or poles). The District used 15-foot-tall poles ranging in size from 10 to 16 inches in diameter. If the new trees survive the planting, the site will have "instant" foliage.

The trees are a vital component of a river ecosystem. They help stabilize stream banks to prevent erosion, improve water quality by absorbing contaminants through their roots, and provide ideal wildlife habitats.

"The El Rio R&D project is one example of how the District is working to restore the natural and beneficial uses of the floodplain, which is a part of our mission," said Theresa Pinto, District project manager. "It is exciting and gratifying to see the R&D project implemented since it's one of the many projects identified in the El Rio Watercourse Master Plan."

The Flood Control District of Maricopa County is tasked to provide regional flood hazard identification, regulation, remediation, and education to Maricopa County residents so that they can reduce their risk of injury, death, and property damage from flooding, while still enjoying the natural and beneficial values served by floodplains.

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